



GLOOM has descended on comic postcard publishers with the news that Yarmouth is setting up a comic postcard censorship board to which they will be asked to submit their work for inspection. They feel that to anyone serious-minded enough to take a seat on a comic postcard censorship board their stuff is going to have a pretty feeble impact.

Thought for the Exercise Yard

"It has often seemed that too few of those who visit Dartmoor," says the preface to a recent National Parks Commission publication, "are aware that it is one of our best scenic areas, and that too few seek the inspiration and relaxation which are to be found in its fine wooded valleys, its wide upland landscape . . . and its many other attractions for rider and walker alike." This may seem good stuff to the Parks Commissioners, but Prison Commissioners are said to be looking down their noses.

High Wire Act

JUST when the nation was feeling a little unsettled, its lawns seemingly blackened beyond recovery by weed-killer, income-tax returns looming disquietingly and—as if that weren't enough—officially assured that a noiseless flash in the night sky was about all the warning to be expected of impending annihilation, the Postmaster-General



announced his Birthday Greetings Telegram, depicting in gay colours and expensive draughtsmanship an iced cake with candles and "delightful scenes

from town and country, with the Post Office fitting into the everyday life of the community." And this with the Wedding Greetings Telegram still new and fragrant in the public memory. Obviously Mr. Marples has struck a rich vein, and plans to work it strenuously: we may look for an inexhaustible string of sequels . . . engagement greetings, broken engagement greetings, divorce greetings, greetings tied to the Church calendar, from Christmas to the obscurest Saint's day, all designed by well-established artists and, besides sending ripples of carefree laughter into the homes of the people, helping to boom the telegram business and so keep the price pegged sternly down to a mere three-and-six for twelve words.

Wide

RUSSIAN broadcasts in English, which are refreshingly free from the petulant unneighbourliness so prominent in



official statements from the Kremlin, have lately been inviting queries from British listeners, one of whom asked when Russia was going to start playing cricket and received the reply that the game would probably be played for the first time this summer during the World Youth Festival in Moscow. The question obviously lost its metaphorical flavour in translation.

Clouded Emerald

POSSIBLY the Irish Government knows its own people best, but its attempt to boost civil defence recruiting with a Press advertisement

saying "If a Bomb fell 200 miles away Radioactive 'Fall-out' could harm *Us!*" rather suggests otherwise. Patriots still absorbed in the Six Counties problem and content at the moment with old-style conventional armaments, are likely to reply that if the fall-out is drifting from where they hope, it will be well worth it.

And Broad With It

SENSATIONALISM in film titling has defeated its own ends by this time, but



cinemagoers patronizing *A Man is Ten Feet Tall* are said to be crowding in, eager to get a good look at the character they've spent so many evenings sitting behind.

Forthcoming Attraction

THERE is a touch of piteous optimism in the B.B.C.'s proposal to win viewers with a feature in which a commentator will undergo adventures to include escaping from a submarine, dropping by parachute, and going down nine hundred feet into a pothole. The rival firm already plans to cap it with a commentator dropping nine hundred feet by parachute into a submarine in a pothole, and escaping from that.

The Entertainers

NEARLY three hundred years since Shakespeare's birth

Baconians still question if he *was* born. Three centuries from now, no doubt, we'll see

Wilsonians do the same for Mr. Osborne.

THE SALISBURY PLAIN TYPE WAR

(Ref. White Paper, "Defence : Outline of Future Policy.")

ANY young officer of to-day who has paid proper attention to the Defence White Paper must be feeling pretty puzzled. Next time he is told to draw up a training programme for his platoon (still unautomated) he is likely to insert the required modicum of Current Affairs, Padres' Hours and Interior Economy, and then come to a bewildered halt.

Is he to prepare for a nuclear deterrent war? The White Paper explains (*para.* 12) that there is no defence against this, so the best he can do is ensure that his men remain at all times in a state of grace. Or will it fall to him to ensure that the frontiers of the free world (in Mr. Sandys's mettlesome phrase—*para.* 20) are firmly defended on the ground? The White Paper doesn't say so, but the requirements for this kind of warfare are not likely to differ much from the nuclear sort, as both sides will have atomic artillery (*para.* 22), and in any case the enemy, having dropped their dozen megaton bombs on Britain (*para.* 12), may easily think it worth while to spare one or two more for the reduction of the sixty-four thousand British troops (*para.* 22) sitting on their borders elsewhere.

Perhaps he will be wanted in the Middle East, either to defend Aden (*para.* 26) or to co-operate with the other Baghdad Pact states in preventing Communist infiltration (*para.* 27). Perhaps he will be needed to defend Britain's colonies in South-east Asia (*para.* 29), if he can still think of any; or to bolster up the colonial forces in their increasing commitments for ceremonial parades on important anniversaries (*para.* 33). Finally, and with increasing probability as tenable overseas bases earn their Merdeka, he may find himself in the Central Reserve stationed in the British Isles (*para.* 34).

An officer in the Central Reserve really is in trouble. At any moment his men may be hustled into Comets and flown to Germany to fight a nuclear-type war; to Aden to fight a conventional-type war; to Baghdad to fight a political-type war; or to Nairobi to mount a guard of honour. Fortunately the British Army, with its traditional genius for compromise, is well able to cope with this many-sided commitment;

it will simply continue, as always, to train for a Salisbury Plain-type war.

The Salisbury Plain-type war is ingeniously based on a small standard situation. Redland is at war with Blue-land. Blue-land, whose forces total one armoured regiment, one battalion of infantry and two troops of self-propelled twenty-five pounders, leaguered overnight in the coppices at The Rings 010488, and at first light attacked along the line of the road with the object of taking the high ground north-east of Warminster. Redland's rather weaker forces, comprising only one squadron of armour and one company of infantry, with one troop of guns, are defending the high ground, and will continue to defend it until a young officer with a white armband drives up in a scout car and tells them either that they have been driven off it or that it is time to pack up and go home.

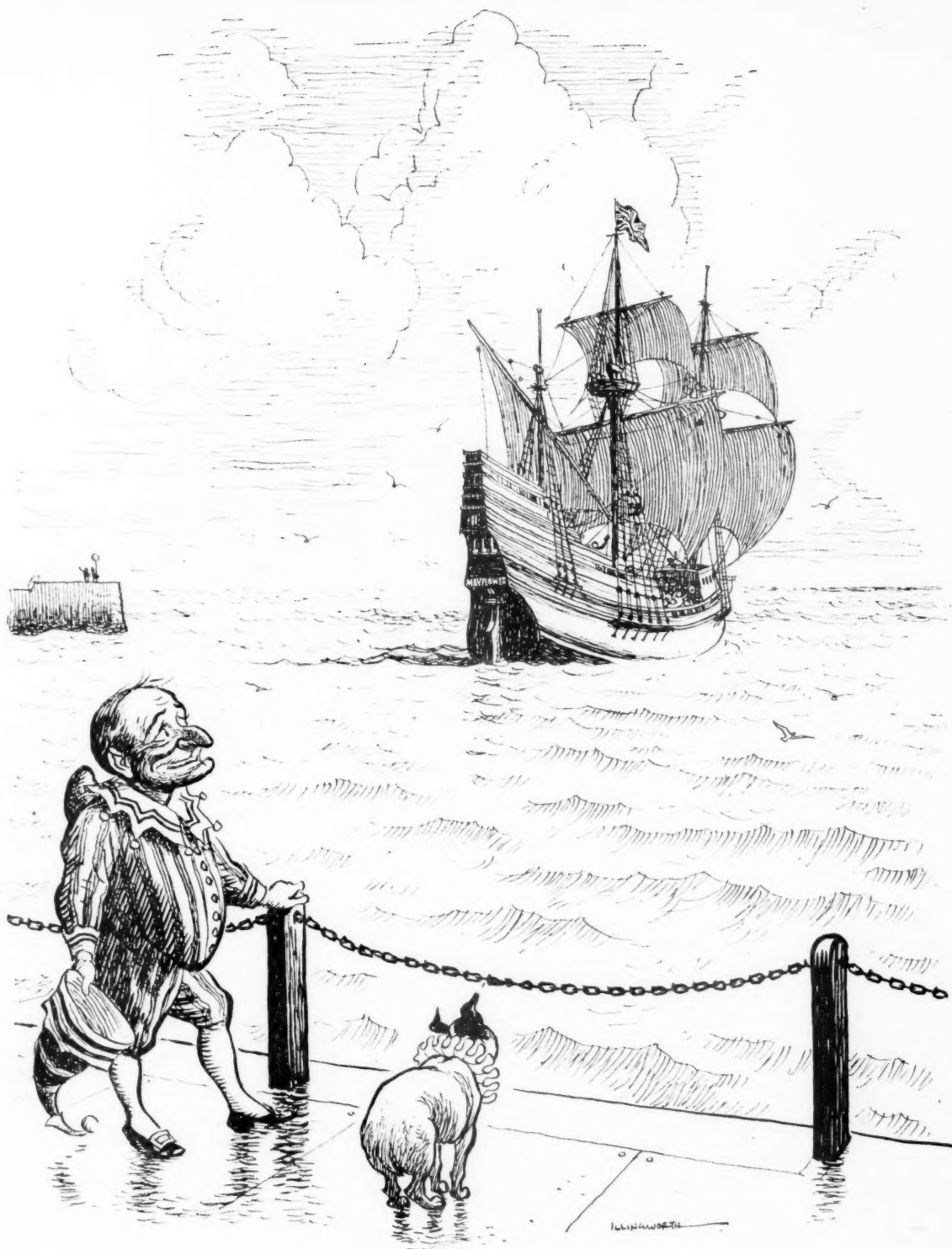
The weakness of the opposing armies is easily explained, and is not, of course, due to recruiting difficulties, this factor being one that never enters into Salisbury Plain-type warfare. If the object of the exercise is to practise the brigade in the nuclear-type war, then all the other troops are suffering from radiation burns in the rear areas; if the colonial-type war, then the enemy are small in numbers and poorly organized, though

equipped by Moscow with a certain amount of more-or-less modern weapons; if the political-type war, then the rest of the troops have been investigated by a Senatorial sub-committee and disqualified for Communism. Similarly if, as is most likely, the R.A.F. have not been able to provide either Redland or Blue-land with any air support, it being the day when the airmen's mums and dads are invited to come and look at the bedside lamps in their barrack-rooms, the situation is easily explained by the fact that the Yemeni air force was destroyed on the ground before the war began, or the R.A.F. has been disbanded to provide manpower for missile-launching units.

From time to time the press or the American Military Attaché or the Duke of Edinburgh will be invited to see a demonstration of new equipment on another part of the Plain. These useful short-cuts to a desolate peace do not figure in a Salisbury Plain-type battle. The odds against there being an Inter-continental Ballistic Missile or a nuclear submarine available for the troops of the Central Reserve to play with are high, but the value of the Salisbury Plain-type war is that all such machines are deployed in the opening narrative only: "Redland is at war with Blue-land. During the first two days of hostilities Blue-land dropped megaton bombs on the vehicle parks at Bicester and Doncaster, and in consequence the strength of the Redland forces has been reduced to one armoured regiment, one battalion of infantry and two troops of self-propelled twenty-five pounders . . ." Thus the troops become thoroughly accustomed to operating with all the latest developments in armament. If for any special reason even further realism were required, a nuclear submarine could be very adequately represented by a soldier carrying a green flag.

Well grounded in the principles of Salisbury Plain-type warfare, the Central Reserve will have no difficulty in tackling any military problem it is likely to have to face. Experience has shown for many years that there is no method better suited to the temperament of the British soldier in fitting him for his traditional task of losing every battle except the last. B. A. Y.





"Good luck, Mayflower, and make a better job of it this time."

News from the Delta

By MALCOLM BRADBURY

The recent London production of "The Member of the Wedding" reminds us that what we're lacking here are some English Southern writers. Why this should be I don't know; it's terrible easy to do. Look, thisaway:

I FANCY I shan't never forget one time when Uncle Julep came home all full of excitement and said he was going to grow mushrooms. Julep went off every Friday regular to sign on at the draft-board downtown. He believed the War Between The States weren't really over—that was just a rumour set around by Northern spies; he figured our boys was still up north

there fighting someplace and by now they should be pushing pretty hard on New York. Julep had a faculty for getting hisself into situations; it was just what happened to external circumstances when they impinged on him. But my Uncle Matty, who had an inferiority complex backed by three of the best psychiatrists in the Delta, was the straight opposite, always trying life with his elbow and finding it too hot.

Soon as Julep came out with this about mushrooms, Momma Honey went right off and told cook (whose name was Eudora Welty, so *she* said; but I never saw any typewriter noplac, and I don't miss a trick) to burn supper; we all

knew from this she was annoyed about the mushrooms. She was mad because she knew he'd been talking to the bus drivers again. Julep collected folks, 'specially bus drivers. He brought out something fine and noble even in those old bus drivers; they'd help him on with his shoes at the end of journeys, let him wear their caps in the bus depot so's people would ask him questions, and teach him how to evade income tax. One thing they was always telling him, because he asked them, was how to make money at home.

Momma Honey hated the bus drivers for the ideas they put in his head. "Don't you mention bees to my Julep," she'd shout as she got on the buses. She'd shout so bad that Matty wouldn't go on the buses no more. One time he just put his head down under the seat and kept it there right into town. "Just you get your head up from under that seat," cried Momma Honey angrily. "I've evolved a defence mechanism," said Matty.

Momma Honey hadn't forgiven the bus drivers since one time one of them advised Julep to keep bees. Although he kept them for side profit, he put them to good use while they was there; he let them sting him, so's he'd never get the rheumatism. "You shouldn't be doin' this, Julep," the old doctor would come and say. "Nonsense," said Julep, racked with pain. "It's good for me." Then one cool day came along and the bees took it into their heads to move into the dining-room for warmth; they stayed three months. Momma Honey was mighty annoyed. "How do I know they ain't stinging my good furniture?" she cried. Visitors often remarked on the buzzing they heard in the dining-room, which Momma Honey kept locked, entertaining in the tool-shed. "We make our own electricity," she'd say, sassily. But no one believed her, because callers was quite often covered from head to foot in bees within twenty seconds. They come through the key-hole. If you saw folks in town wearing those wide-brimmed straw hats with long black veils that beekeepers wear, you knew they was coming to our place. Unless they was just generally scared of bees.

Folks started to complain, of course;





"My ancestors didn't come here on some lousy old wooden ship that took three months to cross the Atlantic—they came here First Class on the Europa."

they said they had to stay inside with the doors and windows shut, blowing on each other to stay cool. They said too that bees used to peer through their bathroom windows at them, as if that would enter a bee's mind. We finally got rid of them due to pressure of public opinion. I guess Julep was secretly rather pleased, since they used to eat two jars of honey a day and never did produce any honey that was rightly theirs. What annoyed Julep was the way folks thought he was being spiteful in keeping them. There never was a kinder man. Here's how kind he was; he used to write folk-songs and teach them to the old fellars in town, just so's they'd have something to sing to Alan Lomax and the folklorists from the State

university when they come asking for ancient ballads with their tape-recorders.

Julep explained that night that the bus driver had a brother who'd made a fortune growing mushrooms in his bath.

So Momma Honey went and read *True Love Story* in the bathroom and sure 'nough in snuck Julep with a great suitcase full of earth. "You don't put earth in my tub," she cried. "It's to grow mushrooms," said Julep, but still Momma wouldn't budge. "I warn you, Julep," she said, "if I find earth in my bathroom, out you go." "I won't, Momma Honey, I won't," said Julep. Next day he asked Matty to help him carry the bathtub outside. Matty decided to practise being firm. "The water would spout out of the pipes,

soon as you took off the faucets," he said, keeping his head down lest Julep laugh at him. But Julep blanched. "You mean there's water flowing all the time?" he asked astounded. "Yes," said Matty, with growing conviction. Julep went to Momma, who was spreading rumours over the 'phone about lice in the town hospital. "Your faucets'll blow off," he cried urgently. "There's water flowing."

Momma Honey knew Julep's enthusiasms didn't last long, but while they did there wasn't nothing you could do but postpone them. So she served Julep mushroom soup every meal. "Delicious," he'd say, sassy as ever (he knew all along what she was doing), "let's have more." Then when Momma



Honey went into the kitchen he'd pour the soup into his top pocket, which he thought was waterproof (he always asked his tailor for waterproof top pockets). Then he'd go out on the porch to empty his pocket, but the soup would have seeped in. "Where's that dern soup gone?" we'd hear him shout, feeling gingerly in his other pockets. One time a bum who had come into town hanging underneath the ten o'clock freight stopped him and asked for a quarter for a meal. "Hold it," cried Julep, "I guess I've got some soup in my top pocket, 'less I poured it away." The hobo shuffled his feet uneasily. Julep saw he was a real character and decided to collect him. "Hold on," he said, "was it fer the love of a woman you took to the road?" "Sure was," said the bum obligingly, and Julep promptly invited him to a dinner party Momma Honey had fixed in honour of a new Southern

writer who was writing us all up for *The New Yorker*.

It was at this party that the whole mushroom business come to a head. Momma Honey was mighty annoyed about the people Julep had invited, especially as he had mistaken the time and they came two hours early, when Momma had no stockings on. The first man to arrive claimed to be an expert on dry rot. "This house won't last the night," he told Momma. The bum was there, stealing silverware from the sideboard. He took Momma aside. "I think I ought to tell you, lady, I have a weak bladder," he said. Momma Honey was in the hallway, showing *her* guests into a separate room, where they sat silently, looking at the wallpaper and yearning for a dog to pat. "Some friends of Julep's is here," said cook. "They've brought a bottle. They want us to fill it."

But what really annoyed Momma was when the Snopeses arrived in their Cadillac and they wanted to put it in the garage so the birds wouldn't mark it none; it was Beulah's divorce present. Soon as they opened up the garage door Julep ran out and hit the Caddie with a stick. "Don't you dare run over my spawn," he shouts; and sure nough the garage was chockful of trays and piles of — I guess I got to tell you, though we're mighty well-bred in the South — recent horse manure.

"Ain't there a smell in here?" asked Beulah Snopes, sassy as a field nigger. "There weren't before you came," said Julep. He was excited, because them mushrooms was *generating their own heat*. He seized Beulah's hand, and her so sensitive (her skin blotches if she so much as hears a detergent commercial), and pressed it right into the compost. Beulah flinched and stepped back. This

annoyed Julep. "Can you generate heat?" he upped and demanded.

Then everyone started giving opinions about mushrooms. No one would talk about another *thing* (the Southern writer never spoke all the evening, and it won't surprise me none if she turns out to be mentally deficient, for all she's been published in *The Kenyon Review*), and Momma was so sore that she told everyone how Julep wasn't really her brother, but an invalid garbage man to whom she gave a home out of kindness, to keep him from stealing. Meanwhile Julep was speaking to the woman next to him at table about *manure*, there in our house which was once, I swear, one of the biggest plantation houses in the Delta. "All mushrooms need is horse droppings," he sings out in a pause in the chatter. Luckily Momma Honey quick-wittedly began to sing. "Good for the lungs," she explained.

The woman next to Julep had now turned in disgust to her neighbour on the other side. Unfortunately this was Uncle Matty, who was silently hating the Eisenhower administration. Matty could never been persuaded to come right out and have relations with *people*, like other folks. He could have been well-known and idolized, I swear, if he'd wished. Why, people from the state university used to come and write about him, because one time he was hit on the head with a whisky bottle in Oxford, Mississippi, by William Faulkner, the William Faulkner who won that foreign prize. But somehow we couldn't get Matty to feel proud; he took it like he'd been hit on the head by just *anybody*. Anyways, Matty was especially intimidated by women, though he cleaned his teeth each day in case one happened to fall in love with him; and when this one turned and said to him "Are you off your food?" he figured it had come at last. "You would put anyone off his food," he said gallantly (we're terrible gallant in the South), knocking over his glass. He'd never spoken to a woman for amusement before, but he figured he knew what to say. "Your head is like cherries," he remarked confusedly; he was under the delusion, I guess, that he had at last established a normal conversation with someone, but his voice just couldn't bear the strain none. "Let's talk about us," he screeched, and, realizing his voice had broken, pretended he was

imitating Galli-Curci. "Lo, hear the gentle lark . . ." he shrilled.

At this point Julep tapped the woman's bare shoulder with his knife. "Listen," he cried, "don't I hear horses' hooves?" He leapt to his feet, seized a bucket and shovel he had concealed under the table and hurried out, instinctively switching out the light. Immediately all was *confusion*. This man who thought a Texan lunatic was after his life dropped to the floor, knocking over our 'cello. "Flat on your faces, folks," he cried heroically. "Lo, hear the gentle lark . . ." Matty trilled. "Take my pulse," said someone who thought he had died. Only the Southern writer was unconcerned. "Do you mind if I take myself a bath?" she asked Momma Honey politely. Someone switched on the television to see if the electric was still working, and the flickering blue light and the voice of an animal trainer added something strange to the scene.

So after that Momma Honey made a real fuss and, since there weren't no mushrooms anyway, Julep tipped out the spawn and manure on our garden patch; and a year later there were so many mushrooms that if you went out of the

house you had to leave a message where you'd gone. They were the oddest mushrooms you ever did see. They'd grow in the morning, by noon they'd begun to rot, and in the evening they'd be putrified. Every night about twelve we'd sneak down to the back patch and shovel mushrooms on to the lots of folks who lived close by. We knew Matty would be self-conscious about shovelling mushrooms, so we never told him. He used to shy shoes at us from his bedroom window, hoping we'd all just go away.

Lapse of Tennysonian Hero

LORD RONALD laughed in merry scorn.

*She was a changeling, he the heir?
"We two will wed to-morrow morn
And you shall still be Lady Clare."*

Guess we her answer sweet and low:
"O gen'rous offer! Best of men!
But, love, I would have thought you'd know—

I shall be Lady Ronald then."

ANGELA MILNE





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A Literary Convenience

By H. F. ELLIS

A FEW weeks ago Mr. E. M. Forster was describing, in the *Sunday Times*, how when still in his impressionable teens he saw first a thin lady, then his aunt, then a stout lady, and finally the coachman, thrown out of a runaway victoria. The noteworthy thing about this affair was that the stout lady was one of Mrs. Gaskell's daughters.

Mr. Forster has all the luck. Nine out of ten authors, asked to contribute to a series called "Great Writers Rediscovered," would scratch their heads in vain for a personal reminiscence of some descendant of Thackeray's or Rhoda Broughton's. Can David Cecil claim to have watched some younger Trollope hurtling from his penny-farthing? Even Mr. Evelyn Waugh, if it isn't libellous to bring him in, probably never saw George Eliot's grand-daughter lose her balance on an escalator or had a second cousin of Hardy's hammering on his front door. But Mr. Forster no sooner sits down to rediscover Mrs. Gaskell than the years roll back, over goes the victoria, and four hundred words fall into his lap.

That, however, is by the way. Mr. Forster goes on to discuss *Cranford*, in which, he complains "the drama is over-quiet," and he adds, with his mind still fondly on the past, "A carriage accident such as I witnessed would be inappropriate. If the Honourable Mrs. Jamieson's equipage upset, and threw her and Miss Matty and Miss Pole and Mrs. Forrester and Mr. Mulliner out on to the Drumble road, the noise would be excessive, it would crack Miss Smith's eardrums." Well, I don't know. One differs from a top critic with diffidence, but that passage made my eyebrows go up. Passing over the quiet drama of the scene when the Reverend John Jenkyns tore the clothes off his son Peter's back, bonnet, shawl, gown and all—and in the Filbert Walk at that—and flogged him with his cane "before all the people," what about the accident to poor Captain Brown? Killed by them nasty cruel railroads, as Jenny put it, while reading *The Pickwick Papers*. I am no connoisseur of accidents, but if the noise of that fatal down train (pulled, at a guess—since this was the

early 1850s and Cranford, or Knutsford, is in Cheshire—by one of Trevithick's old single-wheelers*) was not too much for Miss Smith's eardrums, surely she could have taken a spill from a victoria with equanimity?

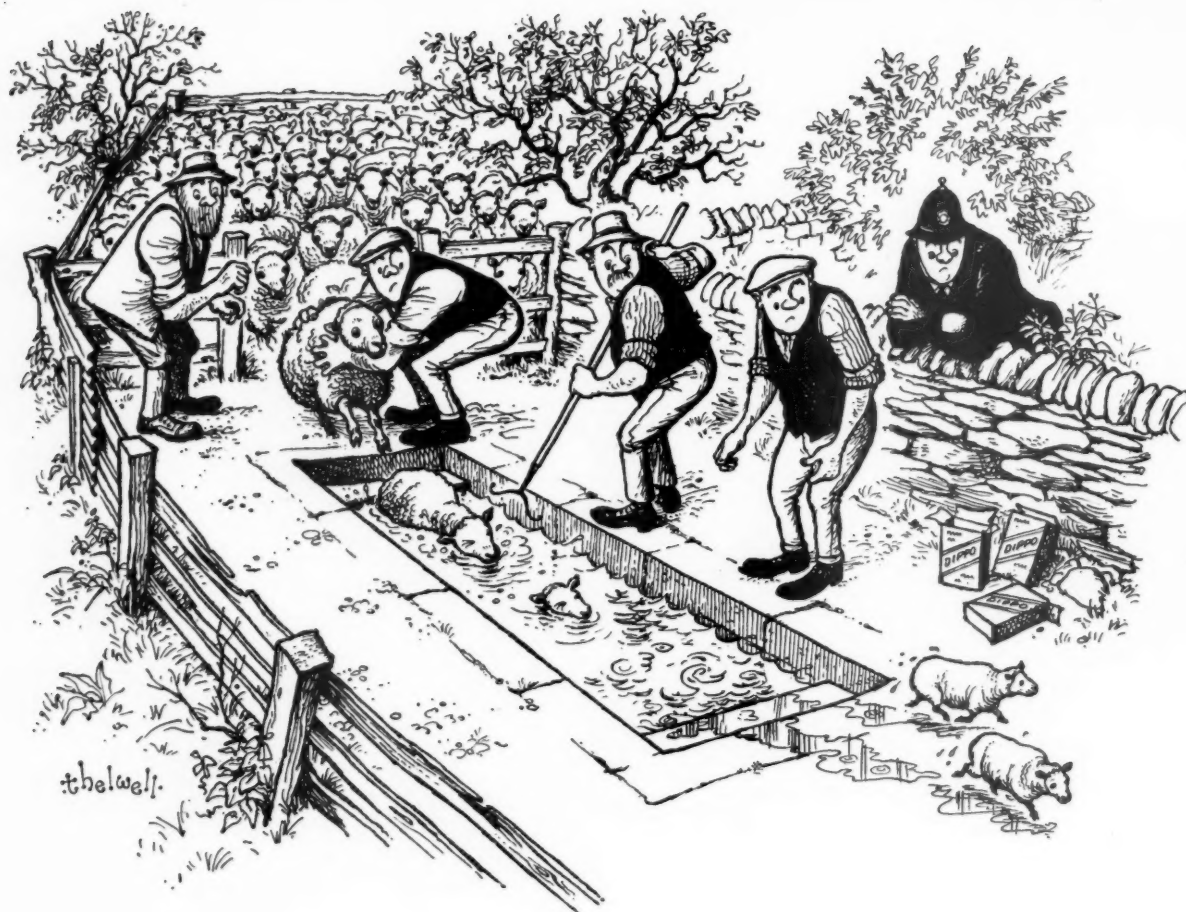
This must be one of the first, if not the first occasion in fiction on which advantage was taken of the new mode of transport to advance the plot and hustle some character off the stage. Certainly the shock of so sudden a catastrophe in so gentle a book as *Cranford* serves to emphasize the debt that novelists owe to the increasing hazards of travel. Accidental death is now so much of a

*On closer inspection, no. *Cranford* was published in 1853, but since Captain Brown was reading *Pickwick Papers* in serial parts the story, and hence the accident, must belong to the 1837-39 period. Could the engine have been one of George Stephenson's?

literary commonplace that one scarcely notices it. If an author tires of a couple of characters half-way through the book he has only to send them out for a spin in a fast roadster. Mr. Dornford Yates does not hesitate to wipe out an inconvenient wife or husband with the simple phrase "an aeroplane which failed to arrive." Motor-cycles, coaches, even the Underground, all help to smooth the path of the hard-pressed writer. To the early Victorians these conveniences were not available—one reason why their novels were so long. They had to do the best they could with lingering diseases of a not very clearly defined type. It took George Eliot the whole of Book III ("Waiting for Death") to dispose of Peter Featherstone—over a hundred pages in my edition; whereas nowadays she could just have sent him



"Drinks all round."



hobbling across the road on a busy Saturday morning. And look at Little Nell. Of course, a man could fall fatally from his horse, but somehow the early Victorians didn't seem to trust their readers to swallow that, or not very often; if anyone can recall half a dozen instances of the use of this ruse I'd be glad to hear from him. As to that last resort, shipwreck, it needs a devil of a lot of staging. Dickens, as everybody knows, was seven-eighths through *David Copperfield* before he felt he could reasonably wreck Steerforth off the Yarmouth coast and get away with a double drowning.

The odd thing is—and it shows Mrs. Gaskell up in a very favourable light as a courageous pioneer—that even when the railways came puffing and clanging on to the scene, with accidents at ten a penny, these Victorian novelists were sadly slow to make use of them.

Wuthering Heights was published in 1847, when the York and North Midland and the York, Newcastle and Berwick Railways were going strong, but Emily Brontë deliberately throws away all the advantages of a healthy smash on the moors, with Catherine and Hareton in the rear coach, by setting the story in the first years of the century, when even the older Trevithick's Pennydaren Tramway was still three years away. Dickens likewise elected to squander ten years of busy railway construction by putting the transactions of the Pickwick Club back to 1827, a time when the Stockton and Darlington was still largely horse-drawn—a circumstance made all the odder by Mr. Tony Weller's savage attack on "the rail," which at that date can scarcely, throughout the whole country, have exceeded a total operational length of thirty miles. *Pendennis* was published

eight years after the opening of the Great Western Railway, *Adam Bede* the year after John Ramsbottom became Chief Mechanical Engineer of the L.N.W.R.; by 1871, when *Middlemarch* appeared, speeds of sixty miles an hour were commonplace. But how many lives were lost in railway accidents in any of these books? I ask the question in a spirit of inquiry, without any intention of skimming them through to find out; but my guess would be, none.

All honour then to the bold and buccaneering Mrs. Gaskell, and a little less of this patronizing talk of trifling upsets in a victoria from Mr. E. M. Forster.

Family Allowance Ramp, Latest

"Mrs. Reginald Maudling, wife of the Paymaster-General, yesterday gave birth to a son. It was Mr. Maudling's 40th."

Burnley Evening Telegraph

Candidus at Oxford

By LORD KINROSS

BATHED in a balmy spring sunshine the Spires, behind the Gasworks, dreamed for the stranger, Candidus Smith. Beneath them in panelled Georgian sitting-rooms the champagne flowed for him, eagerly poured by fresh-faced youths in tweeds. Glowing girls, also in tweeds, matched the sparkle and the froth of it. Candidus, drinking, looked around him in amazement.

"These then are your students?"

"They prefer to be called undergraduates." Oxford, I explained, was divided into two classes—undergraduates from one sort of school, students from another. But with the advance of this best of all possible democracies all school ties were alike, all were becoming undergraduates.

"But what do they study? There are no books to be seen."

"It is a mark of the undergraduate that he studies only on the sly. His books are hidden decently away out of sight. He considers it politer to drink and to talk."

"About what he has read in the books?"

"No. About Life. That's what he is studying. Listen a little."

The youths and the girls were all talking with great animation—about themselves and each other and their friends and their enemies and their masters and their slaves and the idiosyncrasies of their problem parents, products of the Oxford of an earlier age.

"What was yours sent down for? Mine failed in divvers . . . Mine was always going to London and got caught climbing in . . . I have to hide the whisky when mine comes down . . . Mine *will* wear jeans . . . Mine's so embarrassingly *smart* . . ."

"Is it true, sir," asked one, "that there were no girls when you were up here?"

"Well, there was Zuleika Dobson. Then there was Agatha Runcible. We used to sit around her on the floor and admire her shingle. That was about all."

There was a chorus of mocking laughter from the *jeunes filles en fleurs*, accustomed late every night to climb into their colleges with the assistance of gentlemen, party frocks changed for

jeans and cleverly concealed in the dust-bins till the morrow.

Candidus observed that the talk around him was not wholly serious.

"No metaphysics," he commented, shaking his head, "as among the students in the country I come from." In that country, he explained, no student was to be seen without a book—several books as a rule—under his arm as he walked through the streets and across the campus; books open on the grass as he lay there earnestly and in silence beneath the afternoon shade of the trees.

"And he is reading these books?"

Honest Candidus looked a little confused. "W-well, yes, surely."

"Anyway," I said to console him, "there's a new college being built called Nuffield, with a whole spire full of books."

Candidus looked a little reassured,

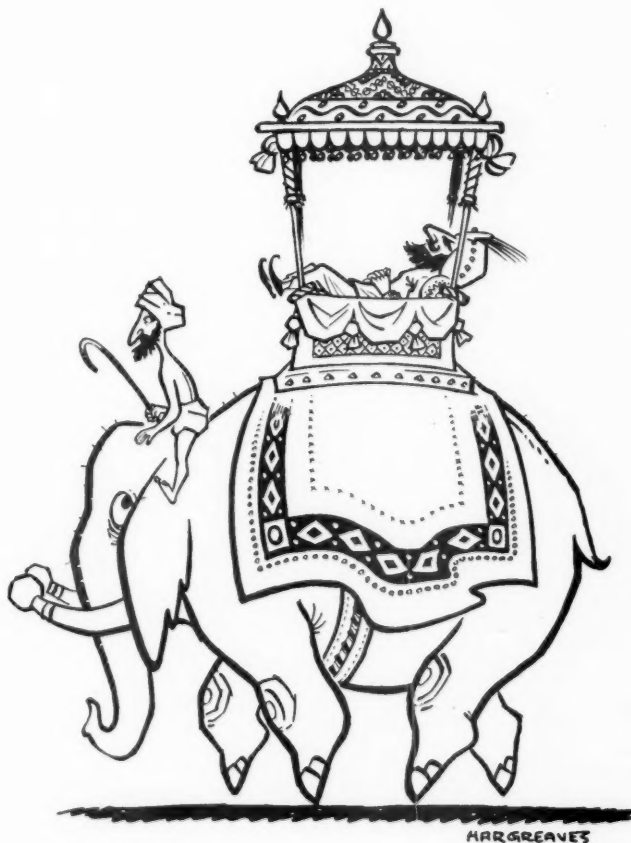
then reverted to the students in his country.

"They look as students should, with their hair properly shorn, dressed in workmanlike khaki drill pants. These young gentlemen wear their hair long, and all differently, and they dress casually, as though for leisure. And do they drink only champagne?"

"Well, in the Labour Club," said one of them, "we drink sherry. Only the best sherry, of course. At a meeting the other day one ass suggested that we should have an inferior brand of South African sherry for Gaitskell's visit. He was overruled, of course."

"This is the best of all possible welfare States," I explained, "whose object, by means of State grants and so forth, is to bring champagne within reach of undergraduates and students alike."

"They are not then very godly?"



"There was a chorus of protest. "On the contrary . . . He's High . . . She's Low . . . I'm a Papist . . ."

"My parents, alas!" bemoaned one, "were rather old-fashioned. They brought me up as a rationalist. I feel rather out of things."

"And in politics? Like all students you are rebels?"

"You mean that Marxist stuff? That's terribly *nouveau jeu*. We're just respectable old-fashioned Radicals."

Soon youths and girls were all speeding in cars over the roads into the Cotswolds to dine and dance far into the night in the stately homes of the neighbouring gentry, kindly giving lifts to fashionable dons, less blessed than they with cars and the means of obtaining petrol unofficially.

In the stately drawing-rooms the dons talked exclusively of the contest for a soon-to-be-vacant professorship. There were, as one of them explained to Candidus, three prominent candidates. Two of them were famed as stars on the panels of Television, a third through the popularity of his books.

"Undoubtedly," said Candidus in his innocence, "the most popular of the Television personalities will win?"

"On the contrary. The third is the more likely to be chosen, because he has not prejudiced his chances in this way."

"But he is less well-known?"

"Exactly. But another factor enters in. The books of two of these candidates are published by the family firm of the

Prime Minister, who makes the recommendation."

"Then one of these will surely be chosen?"

"On the contrary. It is a most unfortunate circumstance for both of them. All things being considered, it is probable that someone quite else will be chosen who has the advantage of being totally unknown."

Noticing Candidus's bewilderment, I abstracted him from the don and bore him away and gave him more champagne, and he was soon being taught to rock and roll in the semi-darkness by the daughter of an earl. In the small hours of the morning we drove back into Oxford, the undergraduates tactfully dropping the dons at their homes, so that they should not have to see them climb into their colleges.

After breakfast I took Candidus to walk off the champagne—and thus prepare him for more champagne before luncheon—beneath the trees of Christ Church Meadow.

"What a fine broad avenue!" he exclaimed. "Yet no traffic runs down it."

"Nor will it, if the dons of Christ Church and these other colleges have their way."

"How is that? They do not *want* traffic here?"

"Certainly not." I explained to him that the dons of the colleges fronting the High thought they had too much traffic, and wanted to divert some of it to the

other colleges. So they had induced a Minister to grant them a road here for the purpose. But the dons here were angry at this. They preferred to walk.

"To *walk*?"

"To walk. An alternative road was planned, farther north, but this would have meant pulling down a public house, of which the people of Oxford are fond, apart from some educational buildings, of which they are not quite so fond. And now the Minister has become the Minister of something else."

"So what is to happen?"

"Nothing, probably. The dons in the High will just get accustomed to the traffic."

Candidus dined that night in the hall, making do, like his fellow-diners, with beer, since he could not get milk. Next day, as the train puffed away from the Spires and the Gasworks now dreaming in blankets of rain, Candidus was pensive.

"These students we met," he began.

"Undergraduates," I corrected.

"These undergraduates, when they have graduated, they will become servants of your State—the cream of your diplomats, administrators?"

"Hardly any of them. They used to. Now they look down on the State and its servants. They like to be on their own—and to have money for champagne. They will become men of business—a few of them perhaps politicians."

"Who then will become servants of the State?"

"The students from other universities."

"Places with dreaming spires?"

"No, with red-brick gables."

"Places where books are carried under the arms?"

"Yes."

"And champagne is not drunk?"

"No, only tea."

§ §

Cynics' Corner

"THE ASHLEY Marriage Bureau, 10 Corporation Street, Manchester. Successful introductions arranged for those seeking happy marriage. A highly confidential, reliable service.

"STILL Single? Suitable introductions confidentially arranged. Details Marjorie Moore, 392 Strand, London, W.C.2.

"A REALLY good Hot Water Bottle will give you lasting comfort. Guaranteed by a famous maker. Only 4/11 each.—Stanley Bubb, Ltd., Chemists, 2 Lansdowne House, Christchurch-road, Bournemouth."

Adjacent advertisements in Poole and Dorset Herald





Lines Before Lunch

MY son, I have some solemn things to say
 On drinking in the middle of the day,
 A habit which your elders all condemn
 (When they reflect what it has done to them).
 But then "A gin? A cocktail?" you protest,
 "A tiny rouser in a well-earned rest!"
 Maybe—but once across that little line
 You sink, though slowly, to the use of *wine*;
 The soul is slipping and the step is short
 To Brandy, Benedictine—worse, to PORT!
 All these, my son, I cannot tell you why,
 Have more of power when the sun is high;
 So in the tropics men who serve the Crown
 Will touch no liquor till the sun is down.
 Ah, would that some such wholesome rule as this
 Controlled the clubs of our metropolis,
 Where every corner, all the afternoon,
 Conceals a member in a noisy swoon.
 How oft your father then invites the Muse
 But falls, agape, into a shameful snooze,
 And wakes to hear, like shingle on the shore
 His own obscene, unseasonable snore!

True, there are precedents of high regard:
 Soon as the sun is seen above the yard
 Our sailors (who invariably win)
 Send up the signal for a small pink gin,
 And, without injury that we can see,
 Sometimes adventure into two or three.

But they who keep long vigils with the moon
 Deserve to slumber in the afternoon:
 We landmen, poets, with a name to make,
 Must own a duty to remain awake.
 There are exceptions, boy, to every rule:
 But he who thinks they shake it is a fool.
 For you, my son, one law of life I fix:
 Avoid the Demon Alcohol till six.
 And if, as I believe, you boast a will
 The hour of seven would be better still.
 Then, the due labours of the day behind,
 In conscious rectitude you may be wined.

But do not suffer, having got so far,
 "Apéritifs" your appetite to mar.
 Permit the soup, the salmon-trout, to pass
 Before you spoil your palate with a glass.
 But then—but then—the day is nearly done:
 Why not conclude as well as you've begun?
 A pity, now, like wanton boys, to throw
 A single pebble on the virgin snow.
 To-morrow wake, a master, not a slave—
 And think of all the money you will save!

No more, my son, Ah, me, if I could claim
 For what I say, and what I do, the same!
 Observe how long this homily of mine
 Has kept you from the whisky and the wine.
 But now, before we lunch, let's have a drink:
 A dry Martini would be nice, I think.

A. P. H.

CAT'S LIFE



"WELL, FIRST I'D WANT TO INSPECT YOUR HOME — AND THEN, OF COURSE I'D NEED SOME SORT OF REFERENCE"



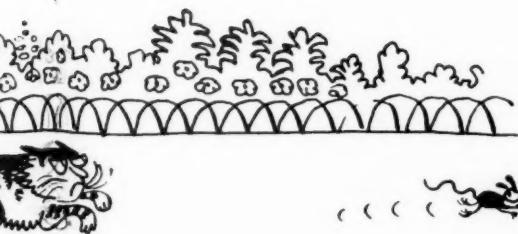
"OH NONSENSE! THE MOUSE EN"



"IF DARLING TIBBY SO MUCH AS SNIFFS AT MY BUDGIES I'LL KNOCK HIS DARLING BLOCK OFF"



"I'M SORRY—THEY'RE NOT FOR SALE"



"THE MOUSE ENJOYS IT AS MUCH AS PUSSY"



"I'M FRIGHTENED TO COME DOWN TOO"

Toeing the Borderline

By MARY CECIL

I HEARD a talk by an ex-patient in a mental hospital and it wasn't up to much. On the Third it was, too. From certain clues it was clear we shared the same old hospital tie. Poor chap, I thought, he hasn't been out long, anyone can tell that. On the strength of my three years' distance from the thing I wrote him an enormous and compassionate letter, explaining the heart-breaks and progressions of the recuperative period, asking after Nurse this and Doctor that, and I received back a small and snooty note about how he was giving a further talk on convalescence (he never did) for which my letter would come in handy, and how publishers had been besieging him for a book on his experiences (it still hasn't appeared).

Damn your ingratitude, I thought, I'll jolly well beat you to it on your next talk. I wrote it, and it was such fun I wrote another to sit behind it, and that was even better, so I did a third which became the second, if you follow me. The last, which of course was really the first, was a hoot. It'll kill them, I decided. The fact that the B.B.C. take their lunacy dead seriously didn't dampen me, somehow. I suppose I couldn't have been as recovered as I imagined.

However, during the usual six months' silence I sobered down a lot and began to feel painfully foolish. They probably thought I'd escaped. One day I had a typewritten envelope which looked promising, but it turned out to be from the hospital, tactfully suggesting a

check-up. The B.B.C. must have put them up to it. I felt like crawling into a hole, but rallied enough to refuse the hospital offer with dignity. Sometimes a nervous breakdown in one's past is as bad as a criminal record.

"Why don't you ring up about those talks?" Wilfrid said.

"Good heavens no," I said, "that might alarm them."

"Well, write them a threatening note on poisoned paper."

As if tipped off by my old voices (I'd often wondered where they'd gone after leaving me) the B.B.C. wrote next day. A Miss Bonzo. She said they got loads on that subject and it was only the quality of the writing which was making her hesitate over my stuff. On the other hand, she wasn't at all sure I ought to broadcast.

"Why not?" I asked Wilfrid. "Does she think I'll start blaspheming on the air?"

Wilfrid said yes.

A few more contradictions and veiled sentences, and the unhappy Bonzo finished with a desperate question: Should she ring me in a day or two?

"What do I do? Ring up and say yes do, or write and say by all means?"

Miss Bonzo's secretary answered the 'phone and fixed an appointment for a test. She sounded strained, and I pictured Miss Bonzo cowering under the desk, waiting for me to go.

"What does she mean by a test?" I asked Wilfrid. "I hope she hasn't a little hammer. I never could face those. One feels such a fool when one's legs shoot out all by themselves."

"You'd feel a bigger one if they didn't," Wilfrid pointed out, adding maliciously: "I expect it'll be mental arithmetic."

"Then I'm not going. I'm still working out the men and bricks from three years ago."

"Fathead, it's only a voice test they're after."

"Oh? How can they tell if one's hearing things?"

Wilfrid explained more. It hadn't occurred to me until then that the last thing I could possibly do was broadcast. My horror of speaking in public was such I hadn't had even the courage to announce my own flute solos in my



"Congratulations, Mr. Newbold—it's a ghoul."

E.N.S.A. days. Therefore, having written a series of talks proved Miss Bonzo's suspicions were well founded. And this made it imperative to prove how intensely sane I was.

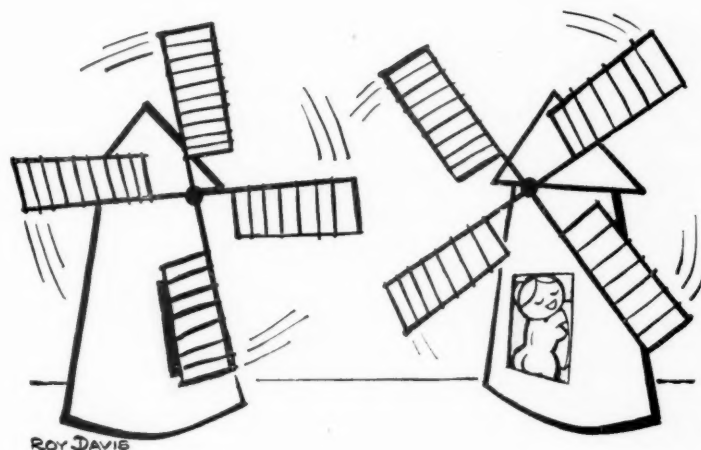
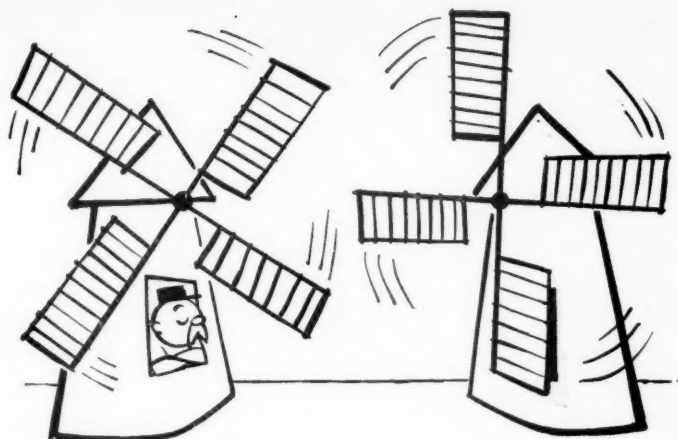
So when zero hour approached I sat beside the imposing desk with all its busy telephones, wiping the palms of my hands, tightening my tummy muscles over the rolling motion beneath them, and rehearsing a serene and self-possessed expression. After half an hour a Very Important Small Boy collected me and led me wordlessly through a labyrinth, finally depositing me in a recess with lullaby lighting and furniture for dwarfs. There was one of those merciless B.B.C. clocks which I watched with growing sensations of impending doom, as in dentists' waiting-rooms. At last a beaming young woman appeared with a tea-tray and I noted with gladness that she might have been more attractive than me had it not been for her too-thick neck. This cancelled out the lowered morale due to the V.I.S.B.

"I'm most terribly sorry, but I've lost Miss Bonzo," her secretary twittered. "I can't locate her anywhere. She's simply vanished."

Spirited away by my ex-devil, no doubt. That'd learn 'em.

I drank all the tea in the pot, went in search of a Ladies' and shot back like a bullet at the sight of the small boy. He drew me into his orbit without so much as a glance and after an intrepid journey put me in a box, willing me into a chair before a panel with many knobs. Having studied them hopelessly for a while, I looked up into a large mirror, and I wasn't there. I'd suspected that all along. Then I perceived someone else in the mirror which reflected a larger room than I was in. She was performing rather odd actions, flitting here and there, peering under a table, darting behind a screen, and staring pensively at the ceiling. Eventually her harassed eyes bumped into my fascinated ones, and she broke up to reassemble in my box, face all screwed up like a guilty child. She'd forgotten it was to-day. Apologies and quite-all-rights chased each other in circles and then she took me the other side of the glass. There she laid my scripts on the table, placed a reverent hand on them, and laid a finger against her lips, looking upwards piously.

"BUT," she said, "the title. Don't



ROY DAVIS

you agree? I mean . . . 'Somewhere a Voice' . . ." She looked suddenly anguished, wild-eyed.

"Yes, perhaps," I said soothingly. "I have some reserves. 'The Devil in You,' 'Mind over Matter,' 'Possession is—'"

"Let's leave that for the moment," Miss Bonzo interrupted distractedly, and I offered her a cigarette. "If you'll just read a page or two I'll go in there and listen. Tell me if you can hear me when I speak in a minute or two."

I opened the script with interest. I'd mislaid my illegible roughs and couldn't remember a word of them. I started to refresh my memory and my astonishment grew. "My dear," I thought in cockney, "it ain't bad. Not bad at all." Absorbed, I read on, covering my grin, vaguely conscious of

Miss Bonzo's agitating presence the other side of the glass. After a few pages I glanced up and saw her making faces and gesticulating, mouthing and making strange signs. I smiled calmly. She burst in, had a little hunt round, and plugged something into the wall.

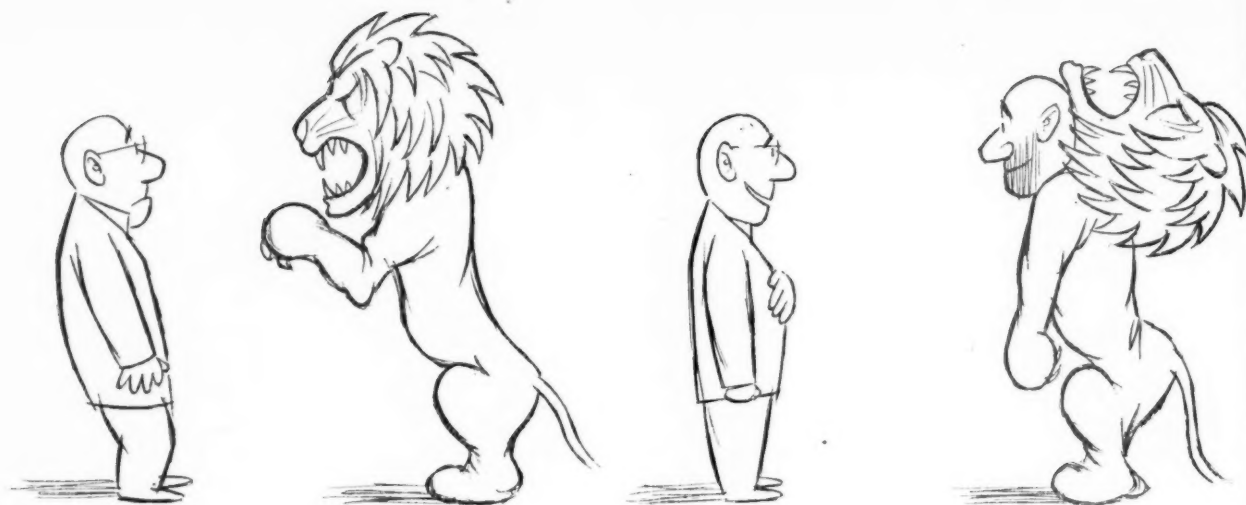
"Now let's try."

A little gibberish came through the loud-speaker, then I began to read aloud, heart thumping and knees shaking, but outwardly blasé.

In crept Miss Bonzo on tiptoe, bending forward with hands together in prayer. I was reminded of one of the riper cases in my observation ward.

"Marvellous," she whispered. "Now I'll read it and you go and listen."

She seated herself, leaned back tragically with outstretched arms, palms



either side of script, and took an almighty breath like mediums do before going off. She read in a pathetic mew and got my devil's inflections all wrong. After all, you're not likely to forget a voice that bellowed rude things non-stop for weeks on end.

"Marvellous," I said kindly, having waited for some minutes for her to open her eyes.

From time to time during our respective performances heads had popped round the door or whole bodies hurtled in as if thrown by someone else, the owners looked electrocuted, gabbed something unintelligible, and rushed out.

We wandered out of the building to have tea, and I was struck by the complete unawareness of Time in this place of all places. Irrelevantly I wondered if the days had dropped out of the bottom of their weeks, as once mine did. Settled at a table, Miss Bonzo disappeared into her depths, staring engrossed at a point rather higher than eye-level. I'd seen a number of them doing that. To put her at her ease I drew her out about her life, and after an hour or two she seemed better and I thought we might come to business at last. On the other hand she seemed quite content to stay there indefinitely, so I moved us out into the street. There

she stopped dead and had another turn, as we called them. The holy smile, the passes in the air—all so nostalgic. I waited for her visitation to finish while people detoured round us. Nothing happened, so to show her how with her I was I pulled an invisible chain and walked off. At the Underground I looked back and she was still there, clasping my scripts to her heart and listening with all her ears.

When I was home Wilfrid said "Well, did you pass? Do they deem you safe to let loose on the air?"

I thought for a while.

"I don't really know. It seems to be a madhouse."

How Does Your Gardener Grow? By J. B. BOOTHROYD

DURING this month and next the hebdomadal, or jobbing, gardener emerges into full bloom, and you will enjoy at last the rewards of your advance planning. This was the object you had in mind during your autumn interrogations of friends, neighbours and strangers on buses. Now the object has arrived.

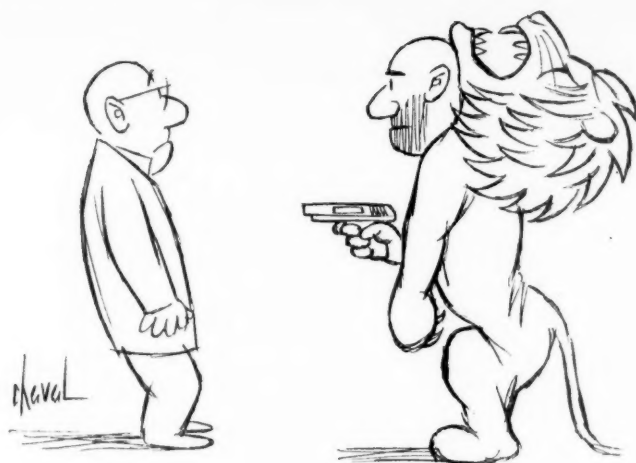
There are several varieties.

Bleeding Heart is perhaps the best known, and one of the easiest to cultivate. Indeed, constant and intensive cultivation is essential. Its chief characteristic is a tendency to entwine the householder in its tendrils—in some cases spreading into the house itself—and communicate details of unhappy experiences from a corm up, which

invariably emphasize humiliations and ruthless prunings suffered in previous sittings, and express, with eloquent writhings, confidence that nothing of the sort will happen in its new situation, particularly in the matter of persecution by convolvulus. If close attention is given, and the plant cosseted in the first days, it usually establishes itself satisfactorily; but failure in this can cause attacks of botrytis (wilting and turning brown), and often results in disappearance without warning, leaving mud-caked tools and the lawn-mower jammed up with long, coarse grass. A prompt application of a rich mulch (compassion and admiration in equal parts) and a light top dressing of tobacco and bottled beer have been known to revive, but it

is seldom that the effects of early neglect, particularly exposure to frost, are eradicated completely.

Usually at its happiest among the coarser vegetables, where it takes root firmly and quickly, is the *Touch-me-Not* (*Impatiens*). But this sturdy, virile and tenacious plant will speedily wither and die in any "decorative" context of lawns, flower-beds, lily-ponds, herbaceous borders or rockeries. Cases have been known where the *Touch-me-Not* has been killed by mere proximity to crazy paving. It is a voracious feeder, and can suck the goodness out of a cabbage-patch in no time, secreting the sustenance in a capacious, sack-like container attached to the back of its bicycle. Thick, "wristy," and visibly



bursting with sap, it prefers the heavier soils, and is completely happy in wet clay. Once it is seen to be prospering in the environment chosen any suggestion of transplanting is inadvisable. It likes space to operate and, in marked contrast with *Bleeding Heart*, must be left entirely to its own devices. Even if it is found to be getting in among the fruit trees, or forcing the outhouses into new positions—its energy is prodigious—leave it alone. Cutting back, if you were rash enough to attempt it, is fatal. Either the new shoots will burgeon with redoubled vigour, or growth will abruptly cease. It is not everyone's ideal; nor is its introduction to be undertaken lightly, as in time the whole garden will have to be made over to potatoes and swedes, with perhaps an occasional border of beets. Its virtue rests in its profleracy and pleasing self-sufficiency, and the gratification to be had simply from watching it at work. Excellent results are obtained where new gardens are being created on reclaimed scrub, swamp, forest or derelict airfield.

Naturally, these hebdomadals are rare, and if you are anxious to beautify your surroundings with as little personal spade-work as possible you must be grateful for any variety you are lucky enough to get. The next is included in this short survey more for its comparative ease of acquisition than any outstanding talent for fringing a pool or ferning a grot. The *Johnny-Come-Lately* (or *Evening Creeper*) only shows itself towards the late cool of the evening, when it is too dark to enjoy it to the

full—and this despite your expectation, prompted no doubt by misleading matter on the packet, or other promises and assurances, that its glories will unfold in the early afternoon. Those ignorant of its characteristics are sometimes startled, during the early period of cultivation, to find that it has blossomed unawares, and is hovering in the dusk about the lawns or hedges, sometimes tapping a tentacle eerily at the sitting-room window, especially if there is a chill in the air, when the correct treatment is to spray with hot, sweet tea (six lumps to a pint). Some householders regard the *Creeper* as a

meaningless freak of nature, and ask why, since it claims a place in the world of visible beauty, it only appears when there is no visibility? Yet, like the rest, it must be accepted as it is; to force it into unnatural habits will only discourage its frail and mysterious hold on existence. Points to note are its faint, not disagreeable odour of gum and stale ink, and a unique appearance due to its inflexible-looking twin stems; caught in a chance ray of light from the porch these are seen to be harsh in texture and coloured deep blue with a fine red line, curiously like postman's trousers. In country districts there is an old superstition that the *Johnny-Come-Lately* is the Jekyll and Hyde of hebdomadals, and during daylight blossoms in some quite other form. Its contribution to any general garden scheme is hard to formulate, and is perhaps restricted to the householder's simple satisfaction at being able to boast that he has a hebdomadal at all.

The *Dwarf Elder* is the aristocrat of the varieties. It is indifferent to vagaries of soil, weather or householder, blossoming unfailingly week after week with instant enrichment of all other growing things within its orbit. Its central form is stunted and leathery, but concealed from view by a profusion of foliage, graceful fingers of glorious chlorophyll-green, each one tipped—if the householder knows a prize bloom when he sees one—with gold.

The Price of Pilgrimage

A plan to make Canterbury "a world centre of Protestantism" at a suggested cost of £8,000,000 has been discussed by American business men and Church leaders.

TIRED of the long pre-eminence of Rome In pilgrim traffic, Protestants have planned To get the same thing going nearer home At Canterbury. There they will expand The business at the cost of many grand Till Church and State alike collect the perks Of massed Episcopalians, cash in hand, Coming in faith to give the place the works.

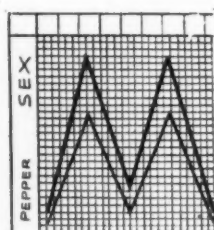
It is recorded, when the martyr died,
His people came to where he lay, and knelt,
And saw the vermin teeming in his dress
So thick that many laughed as others cried:
But without lessening the loss they felt
Or touching his essential saintliness.

P. M. HUBBARD



Cockburn's Aspects of English History

Sex, etc.



MODERN historians—among them Vishniak of Tennessee and Oesterreich Ungarn of Los Angeles—attempting to evaluate patterns of long-term influence—impacts on English history, have rated sex second only to pepper which, as Trevelyan of Cambridge has shown; by being in short supply from the earliest times until the early nineteenth century, went far to necessitate the Empire. Later, as wiser counsels prevailed and hot-heads were restrained, this institution became the Commonwealth of Nations.

There have been some, indeed, who—as a result of a misunderstanding none the less deplorable for being intelligible—have sought to suggest that the English sex-line, as such, was throughout more policy-determinative than the pepper-urge. (The findings of Stab, of Bonn, who claimed that until 1803 there had been a confusion of the pepper-image with the papa-image, are brilliant but unsound. Freud specifically repudiated him.)

It is, however, true that a connection existed between these two influences or, as Twerp of Denver defines them, “the hither-thither-push-pulses.” Nautch girls, for example, were unknown to

English thought and literature until discovered by agents of the East India Company who, as they proved in court, were genuinely out for pepper. On finding nautch girls they had, said counsel, stood aghast at their own moderation. Geisha girls followed for the same reason. A man who tried to make a joke in bad taste about a “Spicy bit of goods” was expelled from the Far East and his licence endorsed.



“The scarcity,” notes Trevelyan, “of fresh meat in winter before the era of roots and artificial grasses, was a chief reason why our ancestors craved for spices,” particularly pepper. It was thus indeed fortunate that “Turnip” Townsend did not succeed in popularizing winter fodder for cattle until it was

too late to stop the conquest of India, and that the sturdy common sense of the English people rejected the specious propaganda of vegetarian doctrinaires, many of whom were of foreign origin. In an effort to create a diversion the Dutch, knowing that if the English could get a chance to do some gardening they would drop everything else, introduced modern horticulture to the country in 1500. Wiser counsels prevailed. Had it been otherwise, England might be very nearly where it is now without ever having had Calcutta, etc., in the meantime.

Describing the price of pepper as “frankly exorbitant,” the Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope to get more of it, and South Africa began, with its many consequences. (Vasco da Gama, however, proved in court that he had been genuinely right out of pepper.) The English Government immediately took steps to impose a sharply increased tax on the commodity. With the idea, apparently, of closing a gap, an influential group of doctors declared that pepper caused Black Death.

All this has suggested to superficial observers that the average English men and women of the period thought of nothing but pepper, to the exclusion of all other interests. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In our day, when "specialization" has been carried to what some thoughtful people consider dangerous extremes, it may be hard to evoke the picture of an age in which it was considered perfectly normal for a man who was interested in pepper to be interested in, for example, sex as well. The units of

trade, and the proposal was dropped. Indeed, within a few years, sex was again so widespread that Elizabeth became an object of general amazement simply by being a Virgin Queen. (In the same way Stanley Baldwin was distinguished from all preceding Prime Ministers by being known as "honest.")

these prophets of disaster, particularly when, a good many years later, they overheard the late Lord Balfour murmur in his inimitable fashion that "nothing matters much and very little matters at all."

It was a shocking thing to say at the best of times, and it was not the best of times when he said it, for already the development of the aeroplane was imperilling England's insular security, and by 1913 the Trades Union Congress counted no fewer than 2½ million affiliated members. The writing was on the wall. It was, as the late Lord Northcliffe said, no time for complacency.

Small wonder that there were many who looked back regretfully to the days before the introduction of competitive examination for the Civil Service had undermined the initiative of English youth.

In this time of growing disillusion it was not to be expected that English sex would feel itself able to proceed in the old carefree way. In other words, it was a time of change. It is not too much to say that if Charles II had had an opportunity to peruse the works not only of the late H. G. Wells but even of the early Arnold Bennett he would have been vividly aware of an outlook on many problems and aspects of social life sharply differentiated from his own. Yet within a few years the German Emperor was to be toppled from his throne, and the late Ramsay MacDonald was to occur as the first Labour Prime Minister, albeit without a majority in the House of Commons.



personnel, as has been well said, of Tudor England were, in the fullest sense of the word, "all-rounders." Not to be proficient in pepper-trading, sex, beating the bounds, mumming, sex, Nine Men's Morris, bear-leading, secret diplomacy, cock-fighting, the ducking-stool, *petits-chevaux*, wassail, sex, dressage, rapine, witchcraft, sex, bowls and beard-singeing was a mark of personal inadequacy, often causing traumatic schizophrenia.

As regards sex, it is true that Henry VIII had brought the whole practice into widespread disrepute and given rise to those efforts to have it suppressed altogether—either, as some urged, by Act of Parliament or, as others deemed sufficient, by the sheer weight of enlightened public opinion—which have continued with varying success right up to our own times. However, a Commission appointed to look into the matter ultimately reported that total prohibition would, in its opinion, in the long run have an adverse effect upon the continuing availability of personnel for, among other industries, the pepper

Yet Queen Anne, who had seventeen children, was known only as being the contemporary of a certain architectural style and—later—as being dead.

Many, Gladstone among them, believed that with the trade routes to the Far East assured, steamships full of pepper available at every port, and the Married Women's Property Act no longer a feminist dream but a solid fact, the traditional English character was doomed to suffer sharp deterioration. What, they asked, would become of young men who, now that they could get fresh meat all the year round, needed less pepper and had more of it than ever before, and were no longer inspired by the possibility of marrying some unsuspecting girl and immediately looting her of every penny she possessed? Might they not lose interest in women and the Empire alike, falling into a state of moral flaccidity only too reminiscent of the decadence of Rome?

Even the example of Parnell, with his vivid and abiding interest in, at least, the Irish part of the Empire and in Kitty O'Shea, failed wholly to reassure



FOLON

Arms and No Men



THOUGH rude Democracy must e'er abridge
 The monstrous Power that stands on Privilege,
 No Tory Cabinet that ever wrestles
 With State's affairs is known to lack its Cecils—
 At least one Cecil, generally a Bob,
 When Tories rule, must always have a job.
 So from the backwoods anxious peers perplexed
 Ask other anxious peers "What happens next?
 Bobbity's gone—gone to make way for whom?"
 And Echo with cold comfort answers "Home."
 But great MacButler with a jaunty air
 Confronts the House, it seems, without a care
 (One half of him turns left, the other right—
 By double motion both the halves unite
 And neither of them seems to mind the least).
 The punctual Sun still rises in the East.
 How comes it that it has no power to scare 'em—
 This novel sight, a Cabinet sans Sarum?
 The truth lies surely in the proposition—
 You can't oppose without an Opposition.
 While half the comrades think the bomb a curse
 That's likely to destroy the universe,

Others, as loud and confident, protest
 They'll have the bomb and also have the test,
 And Gaitskell, having voted either way,
 Feels that he doesn't quite know what to say.
 So, for the test, they both agree that it
 Would suit them all to put it off a bit—
 Have it not now indeed but fairly soon—
 Perhaps about the second week in June—
 To ante up the kitty, as a splicer,
 They ask all foreigners to be much nicer.
Nemine, this goes through, *contradicente*,
 Excepting for Lord Blyton who says plenty.
 One voice is absent—that to-day we hear
 Talking to Mr. Nehru in Kashmir.
 Lo, the poor Indian learns that for his
 health
 He'll do much best to stick the Commonwealth.

When days are longer and the end is Nye,
 It may be there will be some sparks to fly.
 If he can't teach 'em how to shoot an arrow,
 They'd better take some lessons from Nabarro.

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS





BOOKING OFFICE

Good-bye, Old Cat

TO most readers of the pre-1914-war generation the name of Dr. Nikola was scarcely less famous than that of his Chinese contemporary and fellow-physician Dr. Fu-Manchu: it is with a sharp sense of nostalgia that one sees again the long, saturnine, toad-skin-pallid countenance—flanked by the equally *farouche* face of his mathematically-minded black cat—gazing mesmerically out from the pictorial paper cover of the two-shilling edition which has been reissued by Messrs. Ward Lock and Company.

While Guy Boothby's character was not actually a criminal Dr. Nikola did not hesitate either to use extra-legal methods. In consequence he was greatly feared in China—among the *hongs* and *tongs* and Bunds; Benwell of the revenue-cutter *Y-Chang* jumped into a rickshaw at sight of him: "When I find myself face to face with Dr. Nikola, well, I don't think twice, I bolt! Take my tip and do the same."

Happily, however, Wilfred Bruce did not take the proffered tip. The "value of the honorarium" proposed by Nikola for his company outweighed his doubts and fears ("£10,000 is £10,000"), especially since he was stranded in Shanghai with only six-and-tenpence to his name—on his hazardous search for the secret of life and death.

Apollyon, the doctor's enormous cat, also played a large part in overcoming Bruce's initial misgivings; a large sheet of paper was placed upon the floor and with a stick of charcoal Nikola set down a double row of numerals up to ten.

"He then took the cat upon his knee, stroked it carefully, and finally whispered something in its ear. Instantly the brute sprang down, placed its right fore-paw on one of the numerals of the top row, while, whether by chance or magic I cannot say, it performed a similar action with its left on the row below.

"Twenty-four," said Nikola, with one of his peculiar smiles . . . turning the paper over, he wrote upon it the names of the different months of the year. Placing it on the floor, he again said

something to the cat, who this time stood upon June. The alphabet followed, and letter by letter the uncanny beast spelt out 'Apia.'

'On the 24th June,' said Nikola, 'of a year undetermined you were in Apia. Let us see if we can discover the year . . . immediately the cat, with fiendish precision, worked out 1895.

'Is that correct?' asked this extraordinary person when the brute had finished its performance.



It was quite correct, and I told him so."

An experiment in hypnosis completed the conversion; but the doctor himself was not devoid of caginess, and caused his new disciple to be almost garrotted with "a curious wooden collar" in order to test his loyalty. During this incident Nikola directed operations in the role of "a true Celestial. His accent was without a flaw, his deportment exactly what that of a Chinaman of high rank would be," and soon Bruce, also wearing a pigtail, tortoiseshell spectacles, and a thickly-padded robe of yellow silk, was bound with him for the house of a revolutionary named Lo Ting, who aimed to overthrow the Manchu dynasty.

They managed, however, to pass

undetected, and were "in the act of falling to work upon a cold pie" when a message arrived summoning them to the Street of a Hundred Tribulations, Tientsin: this ominously-named thoroughfare being the first step on their journey to the monastery inhabited by the Great Ones of the Mountains, in Tibet. Before embarking on the North China boat Nikola took leave of his cat, who suffered a momentary change of sex when springing upon *her* master's knee but reverted to male status for the actual farewell:

"He will not forget me if I am away five years . . . What wife would be so constant?"

I laughed; the idea of Nikola and matrimony did not harmonize very well. He lifted the cat down and placed him on the table.

'Apollyon,' said he, with the only touch of regret I saw him show throughout the trip, 'we have to part for a year. Good-bye, old cat.'

On board the boat Nikola demonstrated his professional ability by successfully prescribing for a fellow-passenger's prickly-heat; he "joined in all the amusements, organized innumerable sports and games, and was indefatigable in his exertions to amuse," and in Tientsin gave a further example of his medical skill by bathing and binding up a knife wound dealt out to Bruce's future fiancée, Gladys Mary Medwin, by a coolie who has just murdered her missionary father with an iron bar. One man who attempted to kill him was rendered blind and dumb: another, who had recognized Bruce by a scar on his wrist while he was posing as the chief priest's secretary, was hypnotized into remaining bent double for twenty-four hours.

Eventually they succeeded both in entering and escaping from the sinister stronghold of the hooded men, where the paralysed and even the dead were revived by means of electric batteries: Bruce was reunited with his rather pedantic wife-to-be; and later—in the Strand—with Nikola himself, now on his way to see a French chemist in St. Petersburg: "In less than a year I shall enlighten this old country, I think,

in a fashion it will not forget. Wait and see!"

But for once the doctor's promise remained unfulfilled: he was never seen or heard of again; there was no mention, at this last meeting, of Apollyon, and the hearts of many readers may well grieve at the thought of that constant cat, faithfully and vainly awaiting the return of his master in that far country which Dr. Nikola had—as he admitted—made too hot to hold him.

J. MACLAREN-ROSS

The Widow. Francis King. *Longmans*, 16/-

Mr. Francis King, who as a young writer was exceptionally promising, has now touched a somewhat sober fulfilment. His new novel is his best. Its central character, the widow of an Indian Civil Servant, left to bring up two children on a small pension, is drawn with great insight and compassion. We understand at once how she can be both delightful to the outside world and maddening to her children, who feel forced, despite all the sacrifices she has made for them, to live apart from her. The portraits of son and daughter are more conventional, but such minor figures as Major Knott and his elderly mistress, Mrs. Campion, are brilliantly done. The chief faults of the book are the flatness and monotony of its scenes—the suicide of Mrs. Campion is a notable exception—and a lack of distinction in the writing which, starting well enough, grows steadily more tired until it is almost noveletish.

Nevertheless, although Mr. King is guilty of some literary sins—he dodges indiscriminately in and out of the consciousness of his main characters and even tells us facts known to none of them—this is a memorable novel written with an understanding of loneliness and old age seldom found in so young a writer.

O. M.

From Russia, with Love. Ian Fleming. *Cape*, 13/6

The latest adventure of James Bond is the usual conglomeration of sex, sadism, car-lore, gun-lore, international-lore, exciting incident and shapeless whole. These thrillers are habit-forming. They may be no better than worse-publicized thrillers; but once one has read one of them one reads the rest. Mr. Fleming has a splendid streak of sheer silliness and he shares this with many of the classic writers of entertainments, with Conan Doyle and E. W. Hornung and Baroness Orczy and John Buchan.

The first part of this novel shows the most sinister department in the Russian Secret Police planning an elaborate trap for Bond. The second part is even better. Details of Soviet methods are thrown about with great confidence and there is a good deal of near-Ambler in Istanbul. As usual, risk and cruelty are described with considerably more conviction than love and loyalty. The Bond

thrillers are unhealthy products of an unhealthy age; their appeal is irresistible.

R. G. G. P.

A Train to Tarragona. Anthony Carson. *Methuen*, 15/-

Carson is an outsize poetic clown, a combination of baby elephant and literary dragonfly, whose personality on paper bears some resemblance to that of Jacques Tati on the screen. Life to him is a perpetual M. Hulot's holiday, an erratic train of journeys highly charged with explosive fun and electrical drama. The elegance of his iridescent style reflects the darting restless spirit trapped in the tall intractable accident-prone body: apt similes and lyrical descriptions flash from him as he staggers about, losing railway-tickets, banging his head against obstructions, ending up in Catalonia when assigned to write a book about Madrid.

This unique talent for misadventure, stemming from a genuine appetite for the absurd, puts to shame the shallow knockabout contrivances of red-brick writers, for it is allied to a shrewd assessment of human nature devoid of bitterness and envy, though comprising an undercurrent of sadness akin to Chaplin's. His account of a sojourn with an endearingly eccentric Catalan family should bring him many new admirers and delight the old.

J. M-R.

The Night Has Been Unruly. J. C. Trewin. *Robert Hale*, 21/-

This is a survey of the notable freaks and failures standing shadowed in the history of our theatre, and no one could treat them with fuller relish than Mr. Trewin. He includes the sad decline of Master Betty; the flooded Stratford Festival of 1769, when three days floundering in the mud produced one line of Shakespeare, misquoted by Garrick; the fury let loose on Kemble over the forged Shakespeare play, *Vortigern*; the O.P. riots at Covent Garden; and, of course, in our day, the phenomenon of *Young England*, a jingo solemnity mocked nightly to break its author's heart while loading him with money.

But about Henry James, facing in dumb agony the savage gallery at the first night of *Guy Domville*, there was nothing comic; Mr. Trewin's account of this terrible episode is chilling. One hopes he will now turn his amused and scholarly attention to the Dublin theatre, whose expression of dissatisfaction has always made our puny efforts pale.

E. O. D. K.

Union Street. Charles Causley. *Hart-Davis*, 12/6

In the current war between Movement and Mavericks, Mr. Causley is a Maverick undoubtedly: a word-drunk sailor singing derivative ballads as he stumbles home under a rhetorical moon. Some of the ballads are agreeable enough (though others show a surprisingly faulty ear),



"Remember how we used to pour our drinks into the cactus when the other one wasn't looking?"

but the hands of several masters lie heavy upon them: Auden, Housman, Chesterton, Betjeman only begin the list. All poets borrow, but those of powerful individuality transform and improve upon their originals. Mr. Causley, however, seems to be tapping the resources of other poets more and more as time goes by: some of the early poems here, like "H.M.S. Glory at Sydney" and the "Nursery Rhyme of Innocence and Experience," use language with a liveliness and freshness that later on has been smothered under literature. Dame Edith Sitwell, in a preface, compares his ballads to the English and Scottish ballads collected in Percy's *Reliques* and elsewhere. The difference between them is that the old ballads used naturally a current form; Mr. Causley's are merely modern adaptations and imitations.

J. S.

The Scapegoat. Daphne du Maurier. *Gollancz*, 15/-

When the "law-abiding, quiet, donnish" narrator, an English lecturer in French history, on holiday in Le Mans, suddenly encounters in the station buffet his exact physical counterpart, many readers may be taken aback by Miss du Maurier's audacity in reviving this well-worn fictional cliché: yet such is her compulsive narrative gift that one reads on while the inevitable substitution takes place and the unwilling impersonator is addressed as "Monsieur le Comte," has to find his way about the corridors of a château, and decide which of the female household he is married to. Everyone—except the retriever, César—is deceived: mother, younger brother, pregnant wife, saintly eleven-year-old daughter, faithful

retainers, and two mistresses; but complications abound, the atmosphere darkens: enormously fat Mamma takes morphine, murder has been done; wife falls from window leaving a fortune, and the real count returns gun in hand to resume his rightful place . . . Suspense is somewhat vitiated by the fact that almost every situation may be predicted owing to its elaborate build-up, but as an exercise in Modern Gothic the novel is nevertheless hard to beat.

J. M-R.

Corruption. Nicholas Mosley. *Weidenfeld and Nicolson*, 15/-

Mr. Mosley's new novel is very like his first. His talent shows no falling off; at the same time he remains sadly undisciplined, surrounding every incident and emotion with such a fog of words that the reader often feels he is moving blindfolded. As a result the many images that come clear and brilliant, like snow-crags seen through breaks in mist, give, perhaps, an over-impressive conception of the whole. When the diffusion solidifies for a long sequence—as in the description of a Bohemian party or the Lucky Jim-type dinner in Venice—there is little originality.

The story is a gradual revelation of the character of Kate Lambourne. Do we, in fact, know any more about Kate at the end of the book than at the beginning? I do not think so. The truth is that the

author is less a novelist than a poet; he has the poet's eye for the exact, yet startling, simile; he lacks the novelist's gift of holding the attention, of recording pertinent conversations, of building with every stroke some aspect of a character, of presenting a world that exists outside himself. Mr. Mosley's interests are subjective. What he reveals best is himself.

O.M.

Onward Christian Soldier. William Purcell. *Longmans*, 21/-

Seldom can a biography so thorough as this of Sabine Baring Gould have given so slight a portrait; though the outlines are clear, depth and intimacy are missing. We are told little of his marriage, for instance, except that his wife was a mill hand who bore him fifteen children, grew into a squire's lady and made him very happy for forty-seven years. The fault seems to lie not with Mr. Purcell, whose book is otherwise extremely interesting, but with Baring Gould himself; his own reminiscences are unrevealing, and he lived secluded, going zealously about his parish and estate and writing furiously. Too furiously for his reputation, which on his fiction alone might have stood much higher.

"Onward Christian Soldiers," propaganda for the Oxford Movement, hagiology, archæology, folklore—the flood was unceasing. Always an amateur, unscholarly but enormously enthusiastic,

he found time to collect the dying folk-songs of the West Country, and also to bowdlerize them unmercifully. But his humour, his tastes, his life in slippers remain question marks. E. O. D. K.



AT THE PLAY

Zuleika (Saville)

"ZULEIKA DOBSON," "The Turn of the Screw"; in both cases, we thought, a magic arrangement of words, a purely literary excitement bound to dissolve on the stage. With each how wrong we were, and it makes one ask what other potential winners must lie waiting on the shelves for a courageous adaptor. Max would have been astonished to find he had devised an almost perfect plot for a musical, but even at his most fastidious he would have been delighted, I think, by *Zuleika*. Coming after a succession of drearily vulgar imports in the same bracket its taste and high spirits are a lungful of fresh air. It will tap the public which rose to *Salad Days*, and following on the heels of *Fin de Partie* and *Camino Real* it was exactly what we needed to clean our palates of gloom.

I missed it at Cambridge, where it began life as an amateur production, but I gather it has been considerably improved. James Ferman's lyrics may not be remarkably witty, but in his book he has been commendably faithful to Max; little slabs of the original come over with surprising effect, and though obviously the finer ironies have gone overboard, Miss Dobson's convulsion of a whole university remains beautifully light and unsentimental. This is no mean feat, and the happy ending is neatly mortised.

Peter Tranchell's gay and tonic music stays firmly on the same plane; how appealing to the errand-boy, the final arbiter, I couldn't guess. Clearly Osbert Lancaster is the man to decorate such a period folly. Oxford, the dresses of 1911, some lovely, some unbelievably awful, these are done with a loving hand, and so is Max's moustache on a Roman bust. The visitors' clothing, sealing them as completely as an orange, prompted the unworthy thought that at that date chaperones must have been utterly superfluous.

Zuleika is, of course, an impossible part, for we have lost our belief in witches. Mildred Mayne, who took it at short notice, seems to me to get very near a modern sorceress. The great thing is that in feeling she is exactly right, callous and yet gracefully sympathetic. In perhaps her hardest test, Zuleika's conjuring at the ball, only her egg-cracking is out by half an inch. The Duke is also a find, for David Morton combines a face and manner ideal as a frontispiece for *Debrett* with a natural humour which allows him to unbend to Noaks. From the original cast, Patricia Stark is a landlady's daughter who must have been the toast of Oxford.



Noaks—PETER WOODTHORPE

The Duke of Dorset—DAVID MORTON

[Zuleika

John Gower, as the Macquern, has the best voice of the evening. But its chief success, apart from the strange survival of Max and the very telling direction of Peter Powell and Eleanor Fazan, is undoubtedly Peter Woodthorpe's Noaks, the shy and bumbling north-country scholar, whose round eyes behind their pebble-glasses are ever hopeful of a little recognition from his grand acquaintance. This is a comic performance that would illumine any stage.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Two good straight plays, *The Waltz of the Toreadors* (Criterion—14/3/57) and *The Chalk Garden* (Haymarket—25/4/56). For *Amusement Only* (Apollo—13/6/56), a revue with several notable satiric peaks. ERIC KEOWN

AT THE PICTURES



The Lost Continent
The Smallest Show on Earth

I'M not certain to what name or names to credit the direction of the Italian travel documentary *The Lost Continent*. The credit titles of the film itself tell us it was a collaboration: below the line "Directed by" appear in turn the names of nearly all, I think, of the members of the expedition. Leonardo Bonzi was the leader; perhaps he counts as director as well as producer.

There were seven of them in the expedition, which followed the route of the China Sea traders of Marco Polo's time, from Hong Kong southwards to Borneo, Java, Sumatra, the Malay archipelago. They had CinemaScope and colour equipment, and the magnificent pictures they brought back have been made into the most wonderful travel film I remember. Almost the only criticism I have is of the commentary, and the trouble with that is probably that rhetorical "literary" sentences that are quite inoffensive and even pleasing in Italian sound forced and pretentious when translated literally into English. One doesn't really want to hear that these islands are "where men live at peace with one another as though they were on the threshold of paradise itself," or that when the travellers adopted a bear cub "in his innocence he seemed to represent the spirit of the world we were about to enter," or, least of all, the comment that "in this myth we sense man's attempt to understand the supernatural." All the same, this sort of thing is infinitely preferable to the deliberately lowbrow waggishness that travel documentaries usually get.

The visual beauty of the film is astounding: almost every second there is some picture one wishes to dwell on, and it slides into another equally attractive. It will probably exhaust even the comfortable lady in the seat behind you who likes to comment "That's nice" and explain why it is



[*The Lost Continent*]

nice; even she must fall silent after a continuously vocal half-hour or so. It is quite wonderful merely to watch, but it has immensely more to offer. Its use of music (the composer, Francesco A. Lavagnino, was a member of the expedition), often based on the themes played by the bells, bamboo flutes, stringed instruments and bamboo xylophones used in those parts, is extraordinarily effective; and above all it is valuable—and, regrettably, unusual—in its attitude to the people. It allows them dignity as well as beauty: for once the life of primitive communities is presented without condescension.

It would be misleading to pick out particular moments for praise, and any choice would seem capricious, for here is a true *embarras de richesses*. The whole thing is beautifully balanced; I watched all of it with fascination, and I could see it again and again with delight.

The Smallest Show on Earth (Director: Basil Dearden) is really very good fun; it has plenty of corny moments, but the charm of the players and the skill and speed with which the story is told make all the difference.

It is about a derelict little provincial cinema which is left as a legacy to a young man. He goes with his wife to inspect it and finds it is the local "fleapit," hardly more than a liability; the story is of the way they and the three faithful but maladroit retainers still on the premises manage to induce the owner of the "Grand" opposite to buy it for a good price.

The ending is a little dishonest: all problems are solved by the (not unassisted) burning down of the "Grand," after which the owner is willing to pay anything for some kind of cinema to carry on with. The fun is in the accidents and troubles of actually trying to run the little place first. The familiar misadventures recur: the never-failing laughs from what happens to films inefficiently projected, the comic types in the audience and so forth; in fact, given the basic idea, one could imagine the whole thing for oneself. But Bill Travers and Virginia McKenna are pleasing as the young couple, Margaret Rutherford, Bernard Miles and Peter Sellers make a splendid trio of blunderers, and the skill and, as I say, *speed* of narration carry one through the thing laughing nearly all the time.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

A new one in London is *Designing Woman*, which after a slow beginning works up into easily the funniest film for years; more about it next week. Otherwise it's difficult to forecast what will still be showing; perhaps *Lust for Life* (20/3/57) and *Yangtze Incident* (17/4/57) are the only near-certainties.

The two most interesting releases were reviewed here together (10/4/57): *The Monte Carlo Story*, unexpected freshness in a basically conventional "sophisticated" comedy, and *High Tide at Noon*, unexpected interest in a story of lobster-fishermen in Nova Scotia.

RICHARD MALLETT



ON THE AIR

Change and Decay

THE new pattern of sound broadcasting announced the other week by Sir Ian Jacob becomes less attractive with each new consideration of its implications. I disliked it on sight: now I find myself becoming afraid of it.

In place of the Old Lady of Portland Place, benign, benevolent, timid and faintly ludicrous, we are to get a two-headed monster. One head, called B.B.C. Television, will breathe cheap perfume and music-hall vulgarity in competition with the I.T.A., and the other head, called the Light, will shriek "pops" from morning till night in competition with Radio Luxembourg and A.F.N. It is a ghastly prospect.

The Third is to be cut quite savagely to make room for morsels of occupational therapy now considered superfluous by the Home and Light, but otherwise the content of the Third will be the weird mixture as before. So all our criticism has come to naught. We who have attacked the Third have done so not because it caters for minorities but because it caters for the wrong minorities, for minorities which are too small to deserve the nursing attentions of a great national corporation and which are quite capable of expressing themselves satisfactorily in small back rooms. The Third (how about calling it the Old Hundredth?) heard regularly by only one per cent of the listening public, will lose two-fifths of its span, and the chances are that the larger minorities will now find it more difficult than ever to locate items of mainstream cultural significance.

Listener Research tells us that nearly seventy per cent of listeners keep their sets tuned to the Light when they are not



[Nathaniel Tittark

MARGARET BARTON—MAUREEN PRYOR—BERNARD MILES

otherwise engaged with overseas stations specializing in rubbishy ragtime, palm court drip and corn. And now the Light is to be made lighter. Has Sir Ian considered the economics of this operation? The British public already pays handsomely for the privilege of listening to Luxembourg. By purchasing the goods and services advertised on this wavelength it finances innumerable record programmes and disc jockeys and—to some extent—props up the programme contractors of the I.T.A. Can the British public afford to pay for two Luxembourgs, one controlled from Regent Street and a second from Broadcasting House? Why not accept the fact that commercial radio, like commercial television, can supply perfectly adequate pulp-and-chatter entertainment for the mass audience?

With the money saved by dropping the parrot Sir Ian and his planners could convert the Home and Third into thoroughly respectable programmes—programmes capable of satisfying all the important cultural minorities and

continuing (in my view, very properly) the successful policy of education by insinuation.

Not so long ago British Railways reorganized the nomenclature of its compartments, dropped its third-class and set about improving its first- and second-class. The cattle-trucks it left to commercial enterprise. I commend the policy to Sir Ian Jacob.

Serial programmes often hit the jackpot with their initial offering and then experience a sad change of fortune. Not so "Nathaniel Tittark." This delightful and original bout of native comedy goes from strength to strength, with Bernard Miles and company in top form. I am hoping that before the series ends I shall see more of Margaret Barton. As Meg Middleditch she is

superb. Many years ago this captivating "schoolgirl" appeared on TV in the finest ever performance of "Alice." She has been down the rabbit-hole far too long.

Belatedly I must congratulate R.T.F. (Radiodiffusion Télévision Française), the B.B.C. and Richard Dimbleby on their splendid work in vision and sound for "The Royal Visit." Dimbleby is always at his best on these great occasions. He has quite the best voice and the most tactful command of unscripted commentary of all radio and TV performers, and on this assignment he laced his more pontifical deliberations with touches of unusual and very acceptable levity. The result was half a dozen programmes of impeccable quality and truly memorable content.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

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DOUGLAS.

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